



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



---

## ***PRESS-RELEASE***

### **Food for a Difficult Time**

United States Ambassador to the Republic of Tajikistan, Tracey Jacobson, was in the Rasht Valley on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May to monitor food, health and agriculture assistance provided by the United States, and implemented by Mercy Corps to more than 5400 residents of 100 Rasht communities. Ambassador Jacobson's visit coincides with Mercy Corps' final distribution of food aid under the **USAID** Development Assistance Program, which has provided lentils, wheat flour and vegetable oil to pregnant women and mothers of children under two years old since 2006.

Mercy Corps is a member of the Food Assistance Consortium in Tajikistan (FACT) which also includes CARE and Save the Children US and is in the final year of a five-year food and health program **by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)**. **The main goal of this program is to reduce chronic food insecurity and vulnerability of households and communities in Tajikistan.**

Ambassador Jacobson was accompanied by Stephen Kelley, Deputy Country Officer for USAID who, together with Mercy Corps Country Director Brandy Westerman, joined the Mercy Corps team in the jamoat of Boqi Rahimzoda to observe distribution points in two communities where distribution to 424 women was in process.



Left: Mercy Corps' Monitoring and Evaluation team Manager explains to Ambassador Jacobson and Stephen Kelley the documents given to beneficiaries to track their medical visits, immunizations, and attendance at training sessions. Right: A young child carries a can of oil distributed to mothers in the program.



The Ambassador spoke with passionate and enthusiastic women who expressed their gratitude for lessons on agricultural topics, such as greenhouse production of tomatoes and cucumbers. Women eagerly shared the benefits of improved health knowledge with their families, iterating notable improvements in the hygiene of households and the health of pregnant & lactating women and their babies. Breastfeeding sessions and support groups have

led to particularly extraordinary improvements in breastfeeding practices and knowledge of village women.



Ambassador Jacobson is seen here in a greenhouse filled with cucumber and tomato plants, which are already three feet high and producing fruit – an unusually early harvest for Rasht. The greenhouse project was started in 2007 with 289 village educators, and as a result of their success, more than 2,000 household greenhouses have been constructed by families throughout the region.

*DAP Program is financed by the United States Agency for International Assistance (USAID) and implemented by Mercy Corps. Mercy Corps works amid disasters, conflicts, chronic poverty and instability to unleash the potential of people who can win against nearly impossible odds. For more information, visit [www.mercycorps.org](http://www.mercycorps.org).*

*The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is a leading U.S. Government humanitarian assistance provider around the world. USAID has been working in Tajikistan since 1992 and has provided some \$300 million from the American people to support the development of Tajikistan's economy, health care, education, and democratic institutions.*